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STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, WHA/EPSC

STATE FOR INR/IAA, PM, INL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR KPAO OPRC CI

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRIP TO LATIN AMERICA

On March 21, conservative, afternoon "La Segunda" (circ. 33,000) carried a column by Sergio Muoz entitled, "Lame Duck but with Wings." Quote:

"President Bush's recent tour to Latin America shows a change in U.S. policy to the region. The United States abandoned the hope for hemispheric agreements and gave priority to deepening alliances with those countries that value U.S. cooperation, putting aside those that don't want it or don't appreciate it.

"Bush's visit to Brazil... showed that Inacio Lula da Silva is the central interlocutor in the Southern Cone. The agreement to increase ethanol production confronts Chavez' oil supply and opens possible benefits in terms of employment and economic development for countries in the region.... Bush's visit also strengthened Tabar Vazquez... because Uruguayans want to place their products in the U.S. market and end with the perpetual deficit under Mercosur.

"Then there was the support for Alvaro Uribe in Colombia, and the reaffirmation that rather than being worried over recent scandals, the United States is pleased that the process to dismantle the paramilitary network has led to the arrest of politicians suspected of having ties to these organizations.... Critics of Bush's tour should put aside absurd generalizations and stop questioning the capability of the U.S. Presidential Office. Now it is Bush's turn to show that even as a lame duck, he still has wings."

KELLY